

31st Annual Elections Law Seminar for County Officials

Tuesday, July 30, 2013 8:45 a.m. Renaissance Arboretum Ball Room

Thank you Keith for that introduction, and thank you for your leadership as Director of Elections. I have seen firsthand how hard you and the elections staff work to support democracy in our state. I greatly appreciate your service to Texas.

(Pause and focus on crowd)

Good morning, and welcome to the second day of the Election Law Seminar for County Election Officials.

It's truly an honor for me to join you. In the last eight months since beginning my role as Secretary of State, I have learned just how important county election officials are to smooth elections.

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Like many jobs in public service, your work is not always given the proper recognition until something goes wrong. So, let me begin by thanking you for the many, many times elections go well because of your resourcefulness and dedication when there are times of challenge.

Traveling around the state, I have already met with some of you, and I can't wait to meet with more of you this fall as part of our voter education campaign. With the implementation of photo ID requirements, we'll all be busy working to make sure voters have the information they need to cast a ballot. My office knows we cannot meet this challenge without you. That is why we are coming to you first as we begin a statewide campaign about photo ID.

We have prepared some resources for you that you will hear about later today, and we will continue to update our information and develop new tools for you to communicate with your voters about photo ID.

Additionally, we'll be partnering with other stakeholder groups and launching a statewide awareness campaign involving various forms of outreach including radio, print, television and social media.

While we know we can't implement photo ID without you, we also don't expect you to do it alone. It will take a statewide effort to produce statewide results. Thank you for your role in helping Texas voters adjust to this requirement.

Thank you for coming to us with your questions and concerns. Because you are implementing these changes on a front-line level, we need your insight to make things work as efficiently as possible.

Please know, I hear your concerns, our elections staff hear your concerns, and we are thankful to work with you to address any issues.

Another example of how hearing from you helps us to serve all Texans is when we receive feedback regarding TEAM, our voter registration system. We continue to respond to your suggestions and appreciate the valuable insight you have provided over the years. We look forward working with you to provide the best possible solutions for voter registration and welcome any ideas you may have. By addressing issues today, we will help to protect our ability to manage millions of registrations tomorrow.

With the implementation of photo ID and the challenges that come with every election, I know it will take great effort from all of us to serve Texas voters. That said, I am NOT worried.

I have full confidence in our elections staff in the Office of the Secretary of State and full confidence is you. After all, most of you faced the uncertainty of 2012 elections and not only survived but excelled. I know the same will be true for this November and 2014.

Once again, let me say what an honor it is to address you today. All of you are heroes of democracy, and I feel privileged to serve you as Secretary of State. I look forward to working with you all and meeting more of you this fall.

In the meantime, may God bless you and may God bless Texas. Thank you.